

The Training of Midwives.

In a letter addressed to the *Times*, Mrs. E. A. Acland draws attention to the fact that trained women must be ready to take the place of the uncertified midwives, whose numbers are even now decreasing, and whose practice becomes illegal in 1910.

Mrs. Acland believes that private effort and charity are insufficient to meet the enormous demands made upon them in regard to the supply of midwives, and that, as the difficulty has arisen through the action of the State, the State may well assist financially in its solution. She urges that pressure should be put upon the Treasury, so that a grant may be made towards this incalculably important matter of training suitable women as midwives. The most pressing problem facing those who are interesting themselves in the important question of the supply of efficient midwives to the artisan class is not their training, but the means of providing them with a living wage when trained. Any locality which could show that this was forthcoming, would have no difficulty whatever in securing the services of an efficient midwife. But at present, if public money is spent on the training of midwives, they are likely to be a drug in the market when trained. If anyone is to be subsidised, it should be the trained and skilled certified midwife, not the untrained woman who, when money has been spent on making her efficient, cannot find a remunerative opening.

The "Gouttes de Lait" Congress.

Very interesting have been the deliberations of the "Gouttes de Lait" Congress, which opened at Brussels last week under the presidency of M. De Vaux, President of the National League for the Protection of Children. The delegates were welcomed by M. Hellefutte, Minister of Agriculture, who expressed, through them, his thanks to the fourteen nations which sent representatives.

At the Paris Nursing Conference, in describing the "Gouttes de Lait," Mlle. Chaptal advocated also the plan of feeding the mother during her pregnancy, by which means her own health was improved, and she was often able to nurse her infant in consequence. There will always, however, be a proportion of infants needing to be hand-fed. In Belgium "Gouttes de Lait" have been founded throughout the country. In connection with them pure milk is given to poor mothers, and, if necessary, children can be received from the day of their birth, and be kept, and dieted by medical advice, during their first year. The boiling sterilisation and pasteurisation of milk were dealt with at the Brussels Congress by Dr. Dumont, who founded the "Œuvre du Bon Lait" at Louvain, and an interesting discussion took place on these important points.

Correspondence.

THE NOTIFICATION OF BIRTHS BILL.

To the Editor of "The Midwife."

MADAM,—I think, perhaps, that the enclosed (the Hansard proofs of the House of Commons debate) may give you a better idea of my attitude on the Notification of Births Bill than was in your mind when your leader of August 31st was written.

My contention was a two-fold one.

1st: Until you have a supply of midwives to take the places of those who resign it is not wise to add to the burden of many cleanly and careful *bona-fide* practitioners, many of whom, as is the case in rural districts (Mr. Burns did not claim to speak with knowledge of midwives outside London) can neither read nor write.

Secondly, the authority to adopt the Act ought to be the same authority as now controls the midwives, i.e., the Local Supervising Authority, which the midwife *does* know, not (as proposed by the Bill) the Local Sanitary Authority, which at present in 53 counties she does not know.

It was out of order to unite these two arguments, and I had to be content with raising them separately upon sundry amendments.

I have only to-night returned from abroad, or would have written to you sooner on the subject of your article.

Yours faithfully,

JULIUS BERTRAM.

Sishes, Stevenage.

[We have pleasure in publishing Mr. Bertram's letter. He has kindly forwarded to us the Hansard proofs of the debate in the House of Commons on the Notification of Births Bill, which are much fuller than any which have yet reached us. Our contention was, and is, that a woman who is too illiterate to supply the information required under the Act, on a postcard supplied to her for the purpose, is not safe as a midwife.]

In his capacity of solicitor to the Central Midwives' Board, Mr. Bertram has been brought in contact with many most illiterate *bona-fide* midwives, and probably their status has been more impressed on his mind, than that of the many well educated women who at present are working as midwives. Mr. John Burns, President of the Local Government Board, according to Hansard, said, in reply to Mr. Bertram, that "he thought the hon. member had needlessly emphasised the illiterate character of midwives. . . . His (Mr. Burns's) knowledge of the poor had been like Mr. Weller's 'extensive and peculiar,' and he knew something of the midwives in the Metropolis."

We quite appreciate the fact that Mr. Bertram was endeavouring to get fair play for midwives in connection with the Notification of Births Bill, and they are under an obligation to him for his action in this matter. We are quite in sympathy with his point that it is very puzzling to midwives who know their own Local Supervising Authority to be under an obligation to notify to a new authority totally unknown to them.—Ed.]

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